The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives news accounts and editorial interpretations of matters affecting labor occurring in the industrial, legislative, and judicial fields, and contains other information of benefit to the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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AFL
WE PLEDGE—
1 BILLION DOLLARS
IN
WAR SAVINGS BONDS
FOR VICTORY

WHOLE NO. 1714 | WILLIAM GREEN, President | WASHINGTON, D. C., TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1944 | GEORGE MEANY, Secretary-Treasurer | VOL. 34, NO. 7

FACING the FACTS

With PHILIP PEARL

Without impinging upon the non-partisan political policy of the American Federation of Labor, we feel that a few observations on the recent utterances of Presidential candidates would be timely.

This is the season when young Lochinvars ride out of the West, East, North and South bidding for the prize of a Presidential nomination. As yet, we have detected no signs of a challenge against President Roosevelt's apparent priority on the Democratic nomination. But the Republican field appears to be wide open.

Thus, Governor John W. Bricker, of Ohio, came to Washington ostensibly to make a Lincoln's Birthday speech but actually for a political screen test.

Now Governor Bricker is no glamor boy. In fact, his administrative record is undistinguished by exceptional ability, forceful leadership or brilliant statesmanship.

So, in order to capture a few headlines and some favorable editorial comment from the hidebound reactionary press, the Governor and his advisers hit upon the "bold" expedient of taking a sock at labor in his speech. He called upon Congress for legislation to prohibit strikes—apparently forgetting there are such laws on the statute books already—and said the time has come to quit "coddling selfish labor leaders for the sake of the votes which they say they can deliver in an election."

Willkie Replies

Strangely enough, another aspirant for the Presidential nomination from the Republican Party, Wendell Willkie, made his first public statement of the present campaign on labor problems the very next day. Among other things, he said:

"There should be no irrepressible conflict between business and labor. Both are essential parts of American life and economy.

"No man should be elected President who hates either. The next President should be a man who unifies this country, not divides it.

"The Republican Party should be a party that represents the growing social obligations of the time. It should be the friend of labor as well as of other groups and it should bring America to unity."

This statement appears to be a severe reprimand for Governor Bricker, although it was not so interpreted in the press—probably because Willkie tossed in some criticism of President Roosevelt's labor policy in the same package.

Nevertheless, it seems to us that the Republican Party will do well to be guided in its national platform by Willkie's advice rather than Bricker's. Some months ago Willkie warned that no political party can hope to be voted into power in this country without labor support. We believe that New York's Governor Dewey and other leading Republican candidates will agree.

What Will Labor Do?

The Democratic Party has its problems too. Although its titular head, President Roosevelt, has now been in office for three terms, the party has failed to repudiate the bloc of Southern Democrats who have frequently sabotaged the President's program and have waged a rabid anti-labor campaign in Congress with the help of reactionary Republicans.

The obvious and irreconcilable conflicts between the forces of progress and reaction within both political parties call for a political realignment, but that is too much to expect so soon before election. Instead, we will see Democrats, who hate other Democrats more than they hate Republicans, burying the hatchet and joining forces for the major purpose of getting elected and we will also see the same situation and the same process on the Republican side.

What can labor do and where can it throw its support under such circumstances? Before we attempt to answer that question, it may be well to point out that there are groups within the American Federation of Labor who will support the Democratic Presidential candidate and there are other groups who will support the Republican candidate.

This, however, does not necessarily mean a weakening of labor's strength by division of its political power. On the contrary, the very fact that political differences of opinion exist within the Federation's ranks should fortify its non-partisan political policy and tend to make it more successful than ever before.

Thus, the Federation's Democratic adherents have the opportunity of exerting their influence to obtain a strong pro-labor plank in that party's platform and to secure the nomination of candidates who are friendly to labor. And, likewise, the Republican supporters in the Federation can perform a similar function within the G.O.P.

Finally, both groups can work in both parties for the big objective of this election—to commit the Democrats and Republicans alike to a strong win-the-war program, to an uncompromising stand against Fascism and to a constructive and progressive post-war policy.

FDR To Veto Anti-Subsidy Bill

Washington, D. C.—President Roosevelt served notice on Congressional leaders that he is determined to veto the anti-subsidy Commodity Credit Corporation Bill adopted by the Senate and the House.

While farm bloc lobbyists were desperately striving to round up enough votes to override a Presidential veto, it was expected that Congress eventually would heed Roosevelt's admonitions and authorize a compromise.

Regardless of this possibility, it was considered certain that there is no chance of enactment of a billion-dollar subsidy program which is held to be the minimum required to hold food prices in line during the coming year.

Thus, Congress must be held responsible for refusing to hold the line against inflation and the Government will be forced to reconsider its previously adamant opposition to any revision of the Little Steel formula which now prevents wage adjustments to make up for increased living costs.

Even if the Administration finally wins a partial victory on the subsidy issue, the amount authorized by Congress will be insufficient to hold prices of all necessities in check. Without the help of subsidies, the efforts of OPA to enforce price control are concededly hopeless.

Abuses In Rail Manpower Charged

Chicago, Ill.—Over 250 officers of the Maintenance of Way Employes, at a conference here launched a campaign to wipe out shocking conditions on the rails which, they charged, have aggravated manpower problems.

Among abuses bombarded by the union leaders were waste of labor resulting from seasonal unemployment; "farming out" of maintenance of way work at higher wages than are paid regular employes; importation of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans beyond needs of the railroads, and evil conditions perpetrated by railroad "comissary" companies.

The delegates also cited an alarming increase in train wrecks due to neglect of tracks and structures; employment of women and children in jobs for which they are not fitted; overtime discrimination practiced against waymen; excessively long hours; crowded and unsanitary camp outfits for track workers, and many other abuses.

President E. E. Milliman of the Waymen announced the organization prefers to seek correction of such conditions by collective bargaining, but will ask Congress for relief if that fails.

Permanent Labor-Community Groups In 850 Cities Urged By Matthew Woll

New York City.—A four-point program designed to integrate and organize the patriotic and community activities of AFL members was outlined in a message sent to all central labor bodies by Matthew Woll, president of the Labor League for Human Rights, relief arm of the Federation.

Experiences of the past two years, Mr. Woll pointed out, have shown that the League's intensive work on behalf of the Red Cross, the National War Fund campaigns and local community chests, has greatly improved labor-community relations.

For this reason, the League is now calling for the establishment of permanent local committees in all of the 850 cities where there are central labor bodies of the AFL.

These standing committees of the League, according to Mr. Woll, should have these functions:

1. To aid Red Cross fund raising and Community War Chest drives.
2. To cooperate with the social agencies, and the Council of Social Agencies, in each community.
3. To encourage and organize the war-related activities of unions. Under this category would come participation in blood donor and other drives for the Red Cross, USO activities, campaign salvage drives, war bond programs, etc.
4. To arrange for lectures, meetings, plans for publicity, the distribution of literature, planning of visits to USO or other servicemen's centers, etc.

"We are looking forward to a post-war world in which the importance of labor's contribution is recognized not merely on the economic front, but on a variety of fronts. To this end, the establishment of local committees of the League will be of great aid," Mr. Woll said.

AFL Petitions President Roosevelt To Modify "Little Steel" Formula

Washington, D. C.—The AFL members of the War Labor Board bluntly called upon President Roosevelt "to modify realistically" his Executive Order No. [illegible]328 which limits wage adjustments to the narrow confines of the Little Steel Formula.

Charging that price control has failed to preserve standards of living and warning that the ever-widening disparity between wage rates and prices "can lead only to dissatisfaction and frustration," the AFL representatives petitioned the WLB to back their request to the President.

The petition further recommended that if and when the Little Steel Formula is modified, as the facts warrant, employers be permitted to make the necessary wage revisions without going through the tedious formalities of obtaining specific approval of the WLB.

The text of the AFL petition, signed by Secretary-Treasurer George Meany, Vice President Matthew Woll, Robert J. Watt and James Brownlow, follows:

We, the American Federation of Labor members of the National War Labor Board hereby again petition for the revision of the so-called "15% formula" enunciated in the Little Steel cases.

We dissented from the original case in which the 15% limit was set. We petitioned in March 1943 to increase the allowance for maladjustments from 15% to a new realistic figure based upon the actual cost of living to the workers. Our petition was rejected by a majority of the Board. All that is now history. What has not passed into oblivion, unfortunately, is the undeniable fact that the cost of living has still not been stabilized.

The workingmen and women of America have been patriotic and patient. Despite the fact that as early as March 1943 the original assumption of the National War Labor Board that living costs "will now be stabilized under the President's seven point program" has been demonstrated false, these workers accepted another pious hope that—given another chance—the President's price control policies would effectively stop the upward spiral of prices. The reply of the majority of the National War Labor Board to the first petition of the Labor members to scrap the 15% figure was not only accepted by these workers but they speeded up their efforts to win the war by greater production.

This recognition of duty by the workers has apparently been misinterpreted in the halls of Congress. When some effort was made to implement the price control program by subsidies, only delay and confusion were the results. The time has now come, therefore, when the American Federation of Labor members of the War Labor Board are forced to demand that the equities of the workers be recognized.

Nor is this reiteration of our demand for a realistic allowance for the increase in the cost of living based upon a vague feeling that the living costs of workers have risen to new higher points. The record which has been utilized by the Federal Government to trace its failures in price control is in itself adequate proof. Using as a base the Bureau of Labor Statistics figure of 100 to denote the cost of living in January 1941, the figure today stands at approximately 123.4%. In other words, the workers of America are allowed an increase of 15% above the straight time hourly rates of January 1941 to off-set a reported increase of 23.4% in living costs. The inequity of the War Labor Board's "Little Steel Formula" is self-evident even when the "official" estimates of the cost of living are used. But the "official" figures themselves are not accurately representative of what has happened really to the cost of living.

Investigations conducted recently by the Labor members of the National War Labor Board indicated that the cost of living has risen 43.5% since January 1941 or almost twice the amount indicated by the Cost of Living Index of the Department of Labor. These findings conflict with official estimates primarily because a realistic survey of price increases—both advertised and hidden—was made.

There is one inescapable conclusion which can be made from both the "official" and the "unofficial" estimates of the increase in the cost of living: The workers of America cannot rely upon price control as it now functions to preserve their standards of living. The only recourse left to workers is to obtain wage rate increases which will adequately compensate them for the everwidening disparity between wage rates and prices.

The time is now at hand when the National War Labor Board must candidly admit the insufficiencies of price control as currently applied. Neither its original assumptions nor its subsequent hopes that price control would effectively preserve those standards of living which are possible in time of war have been realized by the War Labor Board. Further denial of the workers' wartime equities can lead only to dissatisfaction and frustration.

In summary, therefore, we respectfully petition that:

1. The National War Labor Board request President Roosevelt to modify realistically that portion of Executive Order No. 9328 which limits increases to off-set maladjustments to "the Little Steel Formula as heretofore defined by the National War Labor Board for the rise in the cost of living between January 1, 1941 and May 1, 1942."

2. Employers to be permitted to apply the maladjustment principle thus modified without obtaining approval from the National War Labor Board.

Bates Urges Federal Public Works Plus Private Post-War Housing

Washington, D. C.—Resumption after the war of low rent housing and slum clearance programs for low income families "to supplement and strengthen the major effort of private enterprise in providing modern, soundly constructed homes to as many families as it can reach," was urged by Harry C. Bates, Chairman of the Housing Committee of the American Federation of Labor, before the House Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds.

Mr. Bates pointed out that "public housing is a type of public works, locally developed, which is unique in that it yields the greatest amount of employment at the smallest cost to the taxpayer."

Mr. Bates served notice on Congress that organized "labor will press for the revival of the slum clearance program within the general framework of the United States Housing Act, as an essential part of the post-war housing plan." He stressed that "there is no conflict between privately built housing and public rehousing of low income families for whom new homes have never been provided by private home construction."

Mr. Bates annouced a just completed survey showed that "over 400,000 union building tradesmen are now in the armed forces, including the 'seabees', and the various construction and engineering units of the army." He revealed reports indicating that "the rate of casualties among these construction troops has been extremely heavy."

Emphasizing that the construction industry must play "a strategic and decisive part in stabilizing employment and cushioning the shock of demobilization after the war," Mr. Bates recommended:

1. A "double-barreled public works program," consisting of—(a) short-term construction projects dictated by the most essential requirements of local community welfare. This "program of short-term public projects could be rapidly curtailed as soon as productive activity and employment in other areas expand." (b) Long-range program of "relatively long-term public works which can extend over a period of years and which could also be contracted and expanded to counterbalance the effect of the business cycle upon employment."

2. Advance inventory of all useful and needed public works which would fit this program when the need arises, with federal aid in the most effective design and planning pursuant to request of local communities. Mr. Bates urged federal appropriation of $200,000,000 to provide this aid, with the understanding that the funds would be reimbursed to the federal government when projects are completed.

3. Highway, airport and other construction of such public works as will help expand automobile and other production and industrial employment.

4. Public housing for families of low incomes and slum clearance.

5. Demolition and disposal of all temporary war housing, as soon as war workers can be moved out of projects, "to prevent the development of new slums."

6. Transfer of all war housing of permanent construction to local housing authorities, "for disposition after the war in accordance with the requirements of the local community and under procedures directed by Congress, so far as is suitable for the rehousing of low income families from the slums."

7. Creation of Local Land and Housing Authorities in all communities for integrated and representative procedure of effective community planning for better future.

PRINTING PRESSMEN BUY $5,104,929 WAR BONDS

Washington, D. C.—The International Printing Pressmen & Assistant's Union of North America purchased $201,273.42 in War Bonds and Stamps during January, 1944, bringing the total purchased by the organization to $5,104,929.62, President George L. Berry reported to AFL President William Green. The union has 6,589 members in the armed services.

Green Asks Prompt Defeat Of National Service Bill

Highlights of Pres. Green's Testimony

Washington, D. C.—Highlights of AFL President William Green's testimony before the Senate Military Affairs Committee in opposition to the Austin-Wadsworth labor draft bill follow:

The first contention of the proponents of this legislation is that it would help to solve manpower problems and to promote war production. I cannot conceive on what factual grounds this theory is based. A National Service Act would only substitute compulsion and regimentation for the free enterprise of American labor and American management. If we do this we will be conceding that we are wrong on the basic issues of this war and that the enemy is right.

Enactment of this bill would constitute a catastrophic retreat and an inglorious confession of failure of the American way of life.

Have we failed? The record of this war to date proves incontestably otherwise. In the two short years since Pearl Harbor, America alone has outproduced the combined forces of the Axis by more than two to one.

Surely this record cannot be classified as failure! On the contrary, our own Allies have hailed it as the great triumph of this war. Premier Stalin, of Soviet Russia, is reported to have declared at the Teheran Conference that the United Nations would never have been able to turn the tide of battle and start the new and victorious offensives without the vast output of munitions made by American labor and American industry.

I would be the last to deny that difficult manpower and production problems still confront us in some localities and in certain lines of production. The question before us, however, is whether resort to compulsion and regimentation will help us out of these difficulties or render them even greater. This is a question which the nation's leaders in the field of industry, labor and agriculture are best qualified to answer. They gave their answer last November—a unanimous answer. They declared:

"The American people will provide greater output under a voluntary system than under one of compulsion and regimentation. The solution depends upon leadership, coordinated and understood plans and efficient administration; not upon broadened control and regimentation."

These statements were contained in a declaration made public by the Policy Committee of the War Manpower Commission. The declaration was signed, among others, by the Presidents of the United States Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the American Farm Bureau Federation, the National Grange, the National Farmers Union, the American Federation of labor and the CIO. I repeat it was a unanimous statement; and it rejected the proposal for a National Service Act without qualification.

It is interesting to explore the basic cause of this agreement among the representatives of industry, labor and agriculture. It springs from their experience with the controls already put into effect by the War Manpower Commission and other Government agencies. These experiences have not been happy. Instead of bringing about order, instead of simplifying procedures, instead of promoting efficiency, the record of Government intervention in this field spells only confusion, red tape, contradictory policy and frustration.

Because of such experiences, the leaders of industry, labor and agriculture fear and dread the impact of utter chaos if and when a National Service Law is enacted and the Government attempts to administer it.

I might add, upon my own responsibility, that organized labor has done more on its own account to solve manpower problems in war production than all the various bureaus and agencies of the Government combined. And we have done it without fuss and without any expense to the Government. Time after time, the War Department, the Navy Department and other agencies have called up our union headquarters and asked for so many thousand carpenters, or bricklayers or other skilled workers needed at the site of various projects at a definite time. And each time the unions, through their own recruitment facilities, have had the men ready on the job at the appointed hour.

The combined "know-how" of American labor and industry also has contributed importantly to the solution of manpower problems. A typical example is furnished in the report made the other day by the West Coast Aircraft War Production Council, which revealed that the man-hours of labor necessary to build typical fighter and four-engine bomber planes have been cut 95 percent since the original models were made. These figures were disclosed in order to show that although aircraft plants on the West Coast are expected to build in 1944 50 per cent more airplanes, in terms of weight, than in 1943, it would be possible to do so with relatively small increases in manpower.

The only way a National Service Act could deal with strikes would be to place the strikers in jail, as this bill provides, for six months. But we already have a Federal law, known as the War Labor Disputes Act, which provides jail penalties for strikers. The War Labor Disputes Act has not prevented strikes. Neither would a National Service Act.

We have only to examine the experiences of Great Britain for further confirmation. Britain has a National Service Law, adopted in the national emergency which followed Dunkirk. This law has not prevented strikes in Britain. On the contrary, the records show that there have been more strikes proportionately in Great Britain while the National Service Law was in effect there, than there have been in this country during the same period.

The major cause of strikes is that the Government is attempting to enforce wage stabilization while it has failed to stabilize the cost of living. The way to prevent strikes is to readjust the stabilization program so that the purchasing power of the wage dollar is restored. This can be done either through upward revision of wage rates or, even more effectively, by rigid reduction and control of prices of the necessities of life. Unfortunately, neither the Congress nor the Executive Branch of the Government have thus far seen fit to put such a program into effect.

Yes, the National Service Act would increase the burden of sacrifice borne by those serving on the home front, but it would do so without rhyme, reason or necessity. If such a law should be enacted and strictly enforced, it is appalling to consider the fearful consequences of placing such unrestricted power in bureaucratic hands. Millions of American families might be broken up, thousands of small business enterprises might have to be abandoned. Every American citizen would be thrown into a state of uncertainty and insecurity.

Apparently, the danger of such consequences has impressed itself upon the minds of the leading supporters of this legislation, for Senator Austin declared only recently before this committee that he did not believe everyone would have to be drafted by this National Service Bill.

If the great majority of American citizens will be left undisturbed in their present occupations by this bill, if idlers and dilettantes and non-productive individuals are to be permitted to pursue their own sweet way, if only certain groups of workers are to feel the brunt of enforced labor—then the idea behind a National Service Act is fraudulent and the burden of war sacrifice will be even more unfairly distributed than it is at present.

Yes, our soldiers and sailors and marines who are risking their lives against enemy fire are entitled to feel that Americans at home are backing them up to the limit.

But they are also entitled to the assurance that the free America they are fighting for will be kept intact by us at home, that their homes and jobs will be protected, that they will not have to come home and be demobilized after the war ends only to be redrafted for service in a job not of their own choice.

In the final analysis, the proposal for a National Service Act must stand or fall upon this major test—will it, or will it not, promote the war effort and hasten the day of victory? In my considered opinion, enactment of a National Service Law will not add a single plane, a single ship, a single tank or a single bullet to the nation's war production. On the contrary, it threatens to cripple the amazingly successful production program we are now carrying on.

There are two outstanding issues involved in the present World War which must be definitely settled one way or another by its final outcome.

First, shall totalitarian or democratic government survive and function? Second, is the slave labor system of totalitarianism superior to the free labor of our democracy?

I say to you that enactment of a National War Service Law would defeat our war aims because it constitutes an open confession that Hitler is right and we are wrong.

Why send our young men abroad to fight and die in a war against totalitarianism when it is foisted upon us here at home through the expedient of a National Service Act?

Labor wants this issue of slave labor versus free labor to be determined on its merits. We accepted the challenge on December 7, 1941, and we have given our answer to the enemy with the greatest outpouring of the munitions of war the world has ever seen.

Labor insists and demands that it be permitted to carry on its fight against enemy doctrines without being impeded and chained down by enemy methods. Labor insists and demands that our final victory in this war be recognized and acknowledged as a victory for free labor and the death knell for slave labor throughout the world for all time.

Therefore, I earnestly call upon this committee and the Congress as a whole to defeat this dangerous measure.

Tells Senate Group Bill Menaces War Output And Free Labor

Washington, D. C.—Appearing at a public hearing of the Senate Military Affairs Committee, AFL President William Green demanded defeat of the proposed National Service Act as a menace to war production, a repudiation of the principles we are fighting this war to uphold and a flat violation of the Constitution.

Mr. Green demolished arguments of the bill's proponents that compulsory labor will solve manpower problems, prevent strikes and distribute the burden of war sacrifice more equitably among all the American people.

"A National Service Act," he said, "would only substitute compulsion and regimentation for the free enterprise of American labor and American management. If we do this, we will be conceding that we are wrong on the basic issues of the war and that the enemy is right. Enactment of this bill would constitute an inglorious confession of failure of the American way of life."

The record of the war to date proves incontestably, Mr. Green emphasized, that America has not failed but has won the battle of production with a vast outpouring of the munitions of war which turned the tide of war and enabled the United Nations to start new and victorious offensives.

Instead of manpower shortages, surpluses are likely to develop during the year as the war production program in general begins to enter a declining stage, Mr. Green insisted.

The nation's leaders in industry, labor and agriculture are the best qualified to decide whether resort to a National Service Act will reduce or magnify manpower difficulties. They gave their answer last November, Mr. Green declared, in a unanimous declaration against such legislation. This statement of the policy committee of the War Manpower Commission, to which Mr. Green referred, held that solution of manpower problems depends upon leadership, coordinated plans, and efficient administration, rather than broadened control and regimentation.

The record of Government intervention in the manpower field, Mr. Green asserted, "spells only confusion, red tape, contradictory policy and frustration." He pointed out that organized labor itself has done more to solve manpower problems in war production than the combined efforts of all Federal agencies in the field. This was done by the unions of the AFL in efficiently supplying thousands of skilled workers wherever and whenever needed on war projects at no expense to the Government.

Mr. Green also showed how the combined "know-how" of labor and management has contributed to solution of manpower problems by reducing production time on fighting planes and other important war items.

Taking up the argument that a National Service Act would prevent strikes, Mr. Green pointed to the example of Great Britain to prove the fallacy of this contention. Britain has had a National Service Act since Dunkirk but strikes in that country have increased since then and are higher in number proportionately than in this country, he said.

"A National Service Act would increase the burden of sacrifice borne by those serving on the home front," Mr. Green continued. "but it would do so without rhyme, reason or necessity. If such a law should be enacted and strictly enforced, it is appalling to consider the fearful consequences of placing such unrestricted power in bureaucratic hands. Millions of American families might be broken up, thousands of small business enterprises might have to be abandoned. Every American citizen would be thrown into a state of uncertainty and insecurity."

Mr. Green then referred to a statement by Sen. Austin during the course of the Senate hearings that it would not be necessary to draft everybody for work. The AFL chief then remarked:

"If this statement of the purposes of this bill by one of its authors can be relied upon, then the argument of equal sacrifice topples of its own weight. If the great majority of American citizens will be left undisturbed in the present occupations by this bill, if idlers and dilletantes and non-productive individuals are to be permitted to pursue their own sweet way, if only certain groups of workers are to feel the brunt of enforced labor—then the idea behind a National Service Act is fraudulent and the burden of war sacrifice will be even more unfairly distributed than it is at present."

In the final analysis, Mr. Green said, the bill must stand or fall on the major test of whether it will promote the war effort. He concluded:

"In my considered opinion, enactment of a National Service Law will not add a single plane, a single ship, a single tank or a single bullet to the nation's war production. On the contrary, it threatens to cripple the amazingly successful production program we are now carrying on. Therefore, I earnestly call upon this committee and the Congress as a whole to defeat this dangerous measure."

MACGOWAN ELECTED BOILERMAKERS' CHIEF

Kansas City, Mo.—The convention of the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders and Helpers of America elected Charles J. MacGowan president of the union to succeed J. A. Franklin, who was made president-emeritus. Mr. MacGowan formerly served as vice president of the International Union.